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Commissioner



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3/10/2025

Senator Carney, Chair
Representative Kuhn, Chair
Members, Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0100

Re: LD 753 – *An Act to Support an Aroostook Adult Treatment and Recovery Court* and LD 779
An Act to Fund the Aroostook County Drug Treatment Court

Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn and members of the Joint Standing Committee on
Judiciary:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide information as you consider LD 753 – *An Act to Support an Aroostook Adult Treatment and Recovery Court* and LD 779 *An Act to Fund the Aroostook County Drug Treatment Court*.

An Adult Treatment and Recovery Court in Aroostook County would align the state's most rural region with most other counties in Maine and nine (9) existing Treatment and Recovery Courts. These courts, or rather the case management and treatment services offered through the court process, offer individuals a pathway to treatment and recovery rather than incarceration through contracts with Maine Pretrial Services. As written, both of these bills provide funding to establish and maintain such courts. LD 753 provides ongoing funding in the amount of \$1 million to the Judicial Branch's General Fund in both FY 2025-26 and 2026-26, while LD 779 intends to utilize \$179,500 from the Opioid Use Prevention and Treatment Fund and provide the Office of Behavioral Health (OBH) with \$561,283 in one-time funding to contract for the pretrial services for this court.

However, as proposed, LD 753 does not identify any funding for the critical behavioral health treatment and case management services required by these courts; it identifies funding only for the establishment and operations of the court itself. If the Committee chooses to move forward with this legislation, it is critical that an additional \$500,180 in ongoing funding is provided to OBH to ensure the behavioral health services, training, incentives, and other ancillary responsibilities associated with the case management and treatment services, as well as staffing for two Peer Recovery positions, which are foundational components of Treatment and Recovery Courts, are fully funded.

While LD 779 does contemplate funding to OBH at an appropriate level, the funding is only one-time and is taken from the Opioid Use Prevention and Treatment Fund (OPTF), which is already fully obligated for other opioid response initiatives, including those that support prevention and children, youth and families. Any additional funding obligations in the OPTF would require

eliminating or discontinuing current initiatives. As such, we oppose the use of OPTF to cover these funding needs.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions during your deliberation of this bill.

Sincerely,

Sarah Squirrell

Sarah Squirrell
Director
Office of Behavioral Health
Maine Department of Health and Human Services